



# News of the Network

An update on developments within the  
VA Stars & Stripes Healthcare Network (VISN 4)

March 2005

Dear Employees and Friends of the Network:

Each year we produce many handouts and publications to keep you informed. Along with *News of the Network*, these include *Veterans First*, brochures on the network's Care Coordination and homeless veterans programs, our annual report, and "*Key Indicators*," which regularly reports on VISN 4's budget, workload, and performance.

The easiest way to access this and other useful information about VA health care is through our Web site, [www.starsandstripes.va.gov](http://www.starsandstripes.va.gov). I encourage you to visit this Web site often and to let others know about it, too.

Sincerely,

Charleen R. Szabo, FACHE  
Network Director

## Care for Returning Service Members

As of the end of February, our network had treated 546 returning service members in FY 2005. Including those whom we've served prior to FY 2005, VISN 4 facilities have now provided care to nearly 2,000 returning service members (RSM). For more information, please see the monthly RSM report and our new brochure for returning combat veterans, both located on the network Web site. The brochure includes facility points of contact.



## Compensated Work Therapy Program Expansion

Our Compensated Work Therapy (CWT) program is expanding this year to include supportive employment services. CWT provides a variety of services to help homeless veterans transition back to their communities and the workforce. Supportive employment will help veterans adjust to new jobs once they've left the CWT program. Initially, these services will target veterans diagnosed as having a serious mental illness.



## New “Scriptalk” System Rolled Out

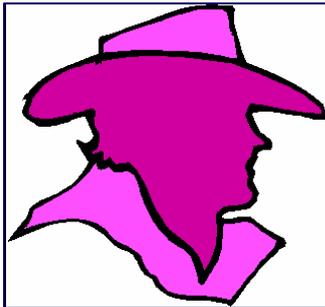
All VISN 4 VAMCs have ordered the Scriptalk system to assist vision-impaired veterans with their medications. Scriptalk uses a special label on the medication that "talks" to the patient and provides directions. The system is up and running at several sites and will be implemented over next few months at all 10 of our medical centers. To learn more, contact your medical center Visual Impairment Services Team “VIST” Coordinator.

## Strategic Planning Effort Continues

Recently, senior leaders from the VISN office and the 10 VAMCs attended a leadership summit to more clearly map out our direction and plans for FY 2006 and beyond. During this meeting, participants discussed several issues that were seen as critical to the future success of the network. Preliminary action plans were developed to address these issues, which include strengthening coordination of patient care, improving access to specialty care, and identifying additional, cost-effective business practices we can pursue.



## Mystery Shopper Program



For the third consecutive year, several VISN 4 VAMCs participated in a “mystery shopper” program. Unannounced, employees from one VAMC called or visited another network facility to gauge its level of customer service in a given area and, where appropriate, to identify potential opportunities for improvement.

Overall, both the in-person and telephone shoppers reported receiving good customer service. Two commonly noted areas where employees should focus efforts to improve were always wearing name tags that are visible and ensuring that telephones are answered in a timely manner. Each participating facility has received their full results for local follow up.

## My Health<sub>e</sub>Vet Enhancements

VA’s “My Health<sub>e</sub>Vet” (MYHV) Web site is designed to help veterans (and their advocates) partner with health care providers to achieve the best possible health. The site has recently added several new capabilities, including one that allows veterans to record their personal information and medical data – such as emergency contacts, health care providers and insurance, prescriptions, tests, and allergies – in a private, secure Internet environment. To learn more, you may access My Health<sub>e</sub>Vet through the network Web site at [www.starsandstripes.med.va.gov](http://www.starsandstripes.med.va.gov), or contact your VAMC’s MYHV program coordinator.

